

HEBREWS -12:4-
Endurance Training: The Loving Discipline of Grace

As kids, or our kids and grandkids we may watch a movie that we love because of certain parts but we don't really understand or like the scary parts. In reality it may be the scary parts that explain the deeper meaning of the movie:

EX: Beauty and the Beast- singing cups and saucers, candlesticks, etc; lovely dresses and some funny characters. A small child will love those, but don't like the deeper story of the man who was distorted in his view of himself and others. SPOILER ALERT:

A pampered prince is transformed into a hideous beast as punishment for his cold-hearted and selfish ways, so the Beast must, in order to return to his former self, earn the love of a beautiful young woman named Belle who he imprisons in his castle.

There are parts of that narrative that a child may not understand, but still enjoys the movie. Maybe s/he wants to skip the scary parts. One father reported that his 3 year old thought the movie was about a girl in a pretty dress dancing with a dog. She didn't really understand the deeper aspects of the storyline.

Sadly, the church is like that in ways. We want all the good, nice, sympathetic parts of the Jesus story, but we want to skip the part about our sinful messy lives that brought about the need for the cross and brought about the pain of sin in our own lives.

We love that God is gracious and loving, and He's about restoration, and He's about hope, and we love to hear these things about God. In fact, we'll come to church and hear about that God because He's gracious and very nice, and He's very much about us. And so, we like hearing about that God. We don't, however, like hearing about other parts of His attributes that might be a little scarier for us, such as His Holiness and Sovereignty. We have been, either on purpose or by accident, conditioned to view God incompletely.

As J.I. Packer says in Knowing God, "I like to think of God as..."
Those words are a red flag!!

We can just look at bestselling books in the Christian marketplace and find titles that speak of "Our best life now" or prayers that will show how we can expand our borders.

The thing about preaching through books of the Bible is that we have to deal with the hard things, and I've sought to do that as we've gone through Hebrews. It has some tough sections. If you don't know the hard part then you don't know the whole story. If we don't deal with the hard stuff then it's just like the girl in a pretty dress dancing with a dog.

At Highlands, we don't just want a breadth of biblical understanding, we want a depth of biblical understanding. Like most areas of life, when you seek to go deep, things become more complicated:

Ex: Astronomer talking with a theologian.

Astronomer says: "Isn't theology really quite simple: 'Jesus loves me this I know'."

Theologian replies: "Isn't astronomy basically, 'Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are'?"

Here in Hebrews 12 we encounter some important instruction that is often off our radar because it falls in the category of 'hard stuff.'

To move through this section we'll look at the
Motivation, Method, and Maturity of Endurance Training

3 For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

4 You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; 5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons,

“MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, (Prov 3:11,12)
NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;
6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES,
AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.”

7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? 8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He *disciplines us for our good*, so that we may share His holiness. 11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Remember that Hebrews is all about endurance and perseverance by keeping Christ in the center of our “eyes” – i.e. Heart and mind.

This is not just important to the AOH, Jesus himself stresses the importance of perseverance in the faith.

Matthew 24:9-13 Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. 10At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. 11Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. 12Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. 13But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved

That’s what Hebrews is about- long haul endurance.

The audience knew opposition because of their faith- broken homes, material loss, being social outcasts. Those who follow Christ in any era will know that in varying degrees.

MOTIVATIONS

v. 1 keep on running with endurance “KEEP ON TRUCKING” (first used in the 1930’s but hit its peak in the 70”s

Don’t give up; keep on going. This expression can be used either as encouragement or as a description.



Motivations::

- **Success of the church – cloud of witnesses:** “God does enable us to endure”
Church history for 2000 years – individual and corporate stories of endurance.

2. The success of Jesus – his experience and endurance, who is now at the right hand who is our sympathetic high priest.

The Example of Jesus who knows the reality of this Fatherly “discipline”.

When it comes to divine discipline for the children of God, Jesus took the punishment so that what we get is for our perfecting. God brings discipline into our lives to protect us from ourselves to yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Keep that in mind as we consider this passage. Since Christ took the punishment for our sin, God’s Fatherly discipline is for our holiness. In fact his discipline will actually work toward our spiritual freedom so that we might lay aside the sin that so easily entangles us.

v. 3- consider by comparing

v.4 the comparison – we have not yet shed blood in dealing with hostility of sinners against us.

Jesus, who knew no sin of his own, endured hostility at the hand of sinners. He has gone to the depth of our experience so that he can give us hope. Heb 5:7-9 Jesus learned obedience

THE METHOD – Fatherly Discipline of Grace

What comes next is something that isn't typically in the manual for how to grow a church – “preach Hebrews 12 about the discipline of God.”

v. 5-11 THE PURPOSE OF THE FATHER – discipline 8x as verb or noun

The idea is education or instruction with a sense of chastisement – they go together. It is not punitive in terms of penance or payment for sin, but it is for education and character development.

EX: If you want to be able to play a sport or an instrument with a sense of real freedom, it will require practice, which is discipline.

Here the bible is not ashamed to say that there is an element of chastisement

The bible is not opposed to just chastisement that is properly administered. In fact it connects it with Fatherly LOVE.

God's discipline is in view of training us to maturity.

v. 5 Your attitude makes the whole difference: don't be indifferent or take his discipline lightly. What does it mean to take it lightly? Years ago John Piper preached “Don't Waste your Cancer”. Here the AOH is saying, “Don't waste the discipline of the Lord.” HOW DO WE WASTE IT or treat it lightly?

- **When we use our sorrow and difficulty and hardship as a justification to live sinfully**, we have taken lightly the discipline of the Lord.

Here's how it works. We'll say, “Well, I'm struggling with this because I have these desires. God made me so how can God judge me if He's the one that gave me these sinful desires.” That is a way to lightly regard the discipline of God to justify our sin.

- **When we use what God meant to draw you unto Him to push yourself away from Him.** You have regarded lightly what He's trying to accomplish. You have traded what He wished to accomplish in you to feed your stomach, your lusts, your desires.
- **When hardship or difficulty occurs and we pursue our sinful outlet.** It's amazing how many guys blame their porn addictions on their wives. You might hear this...“Well, things are tough in the marriage and this isn't really cheating.” Or how many women and men have these online relationships, where they're emotionally connected to other people that are not their spouses. And they're justifying those relationships because of the difficulties in their current relationship.
- **We can waste the discipline of the Lord if we pretend that it isn't happening** i.e. pretend that God would never do that because He wants us to always be happy. When God trains through discipline it won't be pleasant. ...**11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful;**
- **When you ignore the reality that even the hostility of sinners toward Jesus and his followers is ultimately brought to us by God for His deeper purpose and our training in righteousness.**
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To regulate your attitude, Keep in mind the significance of discipline—it is a sign of the love of God.

v.6- 8 – whom the Lord loves He disciplines. Discipline sets a structure and is a mark of being a beloved child of God; a mark that you belong to the family.

Spurgeon tells of Mr Mac who became a minister and called back to Glasgow, near his mother. Not seen in years. She opened the door but did not recognize him.

As a child he was wounded by his mother accidentally with a knife in the kitchen. Afterward each time she saw the scar she would hold him, stroke his hair and say, “Never mind mi bonny bairn; ye mither will ken ye by that when ye are a man” i.e. ‘never mind my good child, your mother will know you by that when you’re a man.’

So to prove who he was, he rolled up his sleeve and showed her the scar and said, “Mither, Mither, dinna ye ken that?”

Immediately they embraced. It was the wounds that proved he was her son.

The wounds of the Lord show we are his children, that we have a father who is not neglecting us.

The discipline of God is a way in which he says, “I love you. That’s why this is happening. It requires a fatherly level of love for God to press you like this than for Him to just leave us alone.

Have you ever been around a kid that hasn’t been disciplined? To what degree is that child set for life? If that’s your child then you have absolutely insured destruction and failure in the future. By contrast God says, “I love you too much for that, so I will wound you if that is what it takes.” And it’s a very difficult idea, but it’s absolutely here.

THE MATURITY OF THE DISCIPLINE v. 9-10

The purpose of the discipline is our Maturity in faith.

The argument is from the lesser to the greater.

v. 10 earthly fathers disciplined based on what they thought was right, but God knows better and does it for our benefit to share His holiness; to become like him in our character – to share the family likeness

God is more about your good than you are. So, let’s read, “...for our good, so that we may share His holiness.” There’s something about suffering that detaches our love from the things of this world and makes us more and more like Jesus.

Rom 8:28ff

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son,

The good is to be conformed to the likeness of Jesus, not for our convenience or relief. It may be painful, but it is good.

God disciplines with wisdom so that we might share His character.

Allow that purpose to shape your attitude.

“if it is for my benefit, it will one day become clear”

The discipline of God may not bring joy, but God can bring supernatural peace. Suffering, pain, hurt, training brings about holiness and the peaceful fruit of righteousness for our good. Those ideas are wildly unpopular.

Ex:Calvin 1542 after death of his son: “the Lord has afflicted a severe and bitter wound” yet acknowledged that even in this grave loss God acted as a loving father and knows best what is good for his children.

“Wasn’t he just living in denial?”

No, it is acknowledgement of pain with faith in the character and intentions of God.

v. 11 – Let your attitude be affected by the reality of discipline
“all discipline” seems to be sorrowful, not joyful at present.

APPLICATION:

Don’t seek to comfort too quickly the grief of others. Be willing to sit with someone in his or her sorrow.

Time element – it is sorrowful at the present time, but afterwards it yields peaceable fruit. Don’t rush it. We don’t know God’s timeline. God is not into microwave spirituality.

There is an afterwards.

The sun may come out tomorrow, but we don’t know when that tomorrow will come.

The MOTIVATIONS, the Method and the Fruit of Maturity are all in view so that we will run with endurance, looking to Jesus who endured.

Remember the lead...

When it comes to divine discipline for the children of God, Jesus took the punishment so that what we get is for our perfecting. God brings discipline into our lives to protect us from ourselves to yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

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